



Report Brief:

[The Battle for Another World: The Progressive Response to the New Right](#), by John Feffer

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Right-wing populists are in charge in some of the world's biggest countries: India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil. How has the far right been so successful? And how can the left mobilize to stop it? For this report, author John Feffer spoke with 80 renowned experts and activists from all over the world.

He learned that the far right succeeded by developing a global narrative of "replacement," linking racist concerns over immigration and multiculturalism with economic anxiety stoked by the global financial crisis. But the global climate crisis could soon become a major liability for the right. Experts pointed to the Green New Deal as a framework that could contest the right's grip on power globally.

The nationalist right went international.

It's a misconception that the far right is an exclusively nationalist movement.

Though they've gained popularity by promising to make their own countries "great again," they act as internationalists. Autocrats share best practices and funding streams across borders. They cooperate with a well-funded network of right-wing civil society organizations and corporations campaigning around the world to roll back civil and human rights.

Actors like Steve Bannon are attempting to stitch together Trump-like coalitions in Belgium, France, Sweden, Italy, and Hungary. The far-right embrace of climate denial, for example gets a big global lift from the likes of ExxonMobil and the Koch brothers. The World Congress of Families, founded in 1997, promotes its conservative cultural agenda through regular global gatherings.

The global right developed a unifying narrative: "the great replacement."

The right has succeeded in part by developing a simple transnational narrative that can be repeated across borders: the "[great replacement](#)" of white people by non-white people, or of a dominant culture by a minority culture.

Introduced by the French writer Renaud Camus in 2010, the "[great replacement](#)" has been taken up by white nationalists across Europe and North America and inspired the mass shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019 and El Paso, Texas in August 2019.

Anti-immigrant and namely anti-Muslim activism has served as a major networking opportunity for far-right civil society organizations pushing this narrative. Organizations like the Center for Immigration Studies and the Federation for American Immigration Reform have coordinated across the Atlantic to curb immigration and further white supremacist rhetoric.

The replacement theory has stirred anti-immigrant antipathy in the U.S. and Europe. A push to stop all undocumented migration has also created both a “Fortress America” and a “Fortress Europe” mentality. A kind of “Fortress Brazil” has also emerged, with Bolsonaro [portraying](#) Venezuelan migrants as a threat. Similarly, far-right Hindu nationalists aim to create a [Fortress India](#) that expels Muslims.

The global left has yet to articulate a comparably compelling narrative that can combat “the great replacement” across national borders.

As unions dwindled and globalization took its toll, the right captured the working class.

Far right political actors took advantage of the vacuum created by the financial crisis. They harvested the arguments and the resistance organized by movements and unions around the world against corporate globalization, but they changed the enemy.

Instead of global capitalism and neoliberalism and corporations, the enemy became the “globalists” — the ones who put free trade before national interests and talked about national interest in the language of justice, equality, and human rights as opposed to borders and sovereignty.

At the root of this transformation has been the right wing’s capacity to harness people’s sense of alienation. This has [caused a shift](#) in working-class loyalties. But the alienation also extends beyond the have-nots to include the have-somes. For Donald Trump, existential anxiety about potential loss of status was a [greater predictor of support](#) in the 2016 elections than actual economic hardship.

Meanwhile, the institutional powerbase that once sustained the left—union membership—is dwindling. In the U.S., union membership has gone from 34.2 percent to 11 percent—only 6 percent in the private sector. In the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development—36 of the wealthiest countries in the world—trade union membership has [fallen by half since 1985](#), from 30 percent to 16 percent.

The right’s Achilles heel is climate change.

But while the right was able to capitalize on the global financial crisis, it has no effective response to the global climate crisis other than to pretend that it doesn’t exist. This presents a major opening for the left. When those 80 global activists and thinkers were asked what international campaign made them most hopeful, the #FridaysforFuture school strikes that 16-year-old Greta Thunberg began in September 2018 headed their lists.

Experts pointed to the Green New Deal as a framework that could rival the great replacement. The Green New Deal isn’t just a uniting force for those who care about climate—it involves the infrastructure financing,

job retraining, and targeted subsidies for green industries that the left has championed for some time as a way to win back those disillusioned by neoliberalism.

The Green New Deal is not an American invention and it already has a transnational following. Yannis Varafoukis, the former Greek finance minister, [calls](#) the Green New Deal the “glue and cement” that can hold together a European alliance of greens, leftists, and liberals. In Asia, a GND could push China’s Belt and Road Initiative toward greater sustainability. For Africa, a GND would provide an opportunity for countries to leapfrog over existing technologies and achieve parity with the Global North at far less cost to the environment.

Essentially, the climate crisis could do for the left what the financial crisis did for the right.

Experts around the globe available for interviews

On the Green New Deal:

Tom Athanasiou, EcoEquity, based in U.S.

On the far right and digital technology:

Julia Ebner, Institute for Social Dialogue, based in UK/Austria

On globalization and the far right:

Walden Bello, Sociologist, based in Philippines

On roots of the far right:

Matthew Feldman, Center for Analysis of the Radical Right, based in UK

On the radical right and the Global South:

Shalmali Guttal, Focus on the Global South, based in Thailand/India

On racism, Islamophobia, and the radical right:

Yasser Louati, Justice and Liberties for All Committee, based in France

On transnational organizing on the radical right:

Melissa Ryan, Hope Not Hate, based in U.S.

On transnational organizing on the left:

Fiona Dove, Transnational Institute, based in Netherlands/South Africa

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The full report can be found on Tuesday, Dec. 3 at <https://ips-dc.org/report-progressive-response-new-right/>.